First Human West Nile Virus Reported for 2011

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An adult male from Goshen County is the state's first reported human West Nile virus (WNV) case for 2011, according to the Wyoming Department of Health.

"We can't consistently predict what may happen with West Nile virus from year to year," said Dr. Tracy Murphy, state epidemiologist and acting state health officer with the Wyoming Department of Health. "Many factors affect the transmission of the disease."

Murphy noted Wyoming has had human WNV cases reported as early as May and as late as October with late summer and early fall as the typical peak times. "The season is not over, and in fact is relatively early for West Nile virus. It remains important for people to protect themselves," he said.

Most people infected with WNV never develop symptoms. Among those who become ill, symptoms include fever, headache, body aches, skin rash and swollen lymph nodes. A very small percentage of infected persons develop West Nile neuroinvasive disease (i.e. meningitis or encephalitis) with symptoms such as severe headache, fever, neck stiffness, stupor, disorientation, coma, tremors, convulsions and paralysis.

The Wyoming Public Health Laboratory offers free WNV testing for healthcare providers with suspected cases in their patients.

The "5 D's" of WNV prevention include:

- 1) DAWN and 2) DUSK Most mosquito species prefer to feed at dawn or dusk, so avoid spending time outside during these times.
- 3) DRESS Wear shoes, socks, long pants and a long-sleeved shirt outdoors or when mosquitoes are most active. Clothing should be light-colored and made of tightly woven material.
- 4) DRAIN Mosquitoes breed in shallow, stagnant water. Reduce the amount of standing water around homes by draining and/or removing it.
- 5) DEET Use an insect repellent containing DEET (N, N-diethyl-m-toluamide). When using DEET, be sure to read and follow the label instructions. Other insect repellents such as Picaridin (KBR 3023) or oil of lemon eucalyptus can also be effective.

Last year Wyoming had 6 human cases and no deaths reported. There were 12 human cases with 1 death in 2009; 10 human cases with no deaths in 2008; 185 human cases with 2 deaths in 2007; 65 human cases with 2 deaths in 2006; and 12 human cases with 2 deaths in 2005.

More information about WNV is available online www.badskeeter.org or by calling 1-877-WYO-BITE